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COMMUNISTS SEIZE POWER IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

WASHINGTON—The complete sweep which the Communists have made in Czechoslovakia is being viewed with particular concern in Washington. In the case of Czechoslovakia's neighbors which bowed to Communist dictatorships, many impartial observers have felt that local conditions played directly into the hands of the extreme Left. Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria, it has been pointed out, had at best a mixed tradition of democracy and autocracy, all were underdeveloped economically, and such moderate groups as they had were fairly small and politically ineffective.

Czechoslovakia, however, cannot be said to suffer from the weaknesses which have encouraged the growth of communism elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The Communists have unquestionably been gaining ground, largely because of the sense of uncertainty resulting from the failure of the nearly two-year-old Constituent Assembly to agree on the political and economic provisions of a new constitution. The nation's democratic forces, however, are by no means bankrupt. Since Communist leaders in post-war Europe have thus far invariably waited until conditions in a particular country made their victory comparatively easy, deviation from this procedure in Czechoslovakia may indicate the adoption by the Communists of a new and more violent strategy. Diplomatic quarters in Washington believe, therefore, that recent events in Czechoslovakia may be the prelude to avowedly revolutionary action on the part of the Communists in France and Italy.

POLICE ISSUE ONE OF SEVERAL. While the full story of recent events in Prague is still uncertain, several points are clear. In the free elections held in May 1946 the Communists, despite their emergence as the largest single party with 38 per cent of the votes, had only a plurality in

parliament, and were able to take the leading position in the government solely because of the willingness of the Social Democrats to support them. Last October this coalition of the two Leftist parties became extremely shaky when the rank and file of the Social Democratic party voted to oust their pro-Communist leaders and to pursue a more independent course. The Communists viewed this development as a serious threat to the policy of governing by parliamentary methods, and they set out to consolidate their position in branches of government and the national economy which would be of particular importance in a test of strength with the opposition. Such a test, they knew, would be soon forthcoming, for the present parliament is scheduled to expire on June 9, and elections must be held some time before that date.

During the past three or four months the Communists have accordingly tightened their control over the national radio, the police, the army, and the trade unions, and have made a determined effort

World attention has been focused on international controversies in the Security Council and General Assembly of the UN. Meanwhile, what has been accomplished, without benefit of much publicity, by the Specialized Agencies of the UN? Read the following FOREIGN POLICY REPORTS by Fred L. Hadsel:

TECHNICAL SPECIALIZED AGENCIES OF THE U.N.—
Finance, Transport and Communication, and Trade
November 15, 1947

HUMAN WELFARE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES OF U.N.
Labor, Food, Education, Health, and Refugees
February 1, 1948

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to secure a quasi-political status for organized labor. It was not, however, until the Communist Minister of the Interior, Vaclav Nosek, began to carry out a systematic policy of promoting loyal Communists and demoting nonparty members that the opposition parties in parliament struck back at the extreme Left by demanding, on February 13, that this practice end.

COMING ELECTIONS INCREASE TENSION.

The police issue, the non-Communists apparently felt, provided the perfect symbol of the fundamental differences between themselves and the Communists, and they welcomed the opportunity to go before the electorate as the opponents of totalitarian rule. This does not mean that the moderates and conservatives were not genuinely alarmed by the intensification of Communist control over the police. In fact, the reported instances in which police officers have been illegally assigned by the Ministry of the Interior to report on political meetings undoubtedly increased their concern. At the same time, however, it is regarded here as likely that the non-Communist leaders recognized in the controversy over the police a first-class political issue and were determined to use it in making the strongest possible bid for popular support in the forthcoming elections. At the time the opposition took this stand, in other words, its members were gambling on the possibility of winning a showdown with the Communists on the police question.

Failing to receive satisfaction from the Minister of the Interior, the twelve cabinet members who represent the Czech National Socialists, People's party and Slovak Democrats proffered their resignations on February 20. The Social Democratic ministers, who also opposed the Communists on the police question, remained in the cabinet pending a decision by their central committee. At this particular moment in the cabinet crisis the next step was clearly up to President Benes. After remaining unobtrusively in the background for the past two and a half years, possibly in an effort to hold his political fire until some particularly important moment

arrived, Benes took an immediate step. Requested by the delegation of Communist workers on February 21 to accept the resignations of the non-Communists and give the Communist Premier, Klement Gottwald, a free hand in selecting an entirely new cabinet, Benes rejected this proposal. Czechoslovakia, he pointedly declared, has a parliamentary regime, and while he recognized the right of the Communists to lead the country on the basis of their plurality, he stated that he could not agree to the exclusion of any group from the cabinet.

U.S. HAS LITTLE INFLUENCE. While the Social Democrats persisted in their demand for a government of all parties and continued to refrain from resigning from the present cabinet, they decided to negotiate with the Communists concerning the latter party's offer to form a joint majority cabinet. Meanwhile, the Communists on February 23 resorted to unconstitutional methods by seizing control of the government of autonomous Slovakia, and by arresting leaders of the National Socialist party. At the same time, however, the Communists indicated that they hoped to avoid resort to completely illegal procedure by discrediting members of the opposition whom they charge with aiding and protecting American and British spies. However, this tactic, which has been employed by Communists throughout Eastern Europe, is not likely to be convincing in Czechoslovakia. For at almost the same moment that the Communist Minister of the Interior launched his attacks on American "agents," the Communist Premier informed Laurence A. Steinhardt, American Ambassador in Prague, of his eagerness to proceed with the negotiation of a commercial treaty which would symbolize good relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia. Yet in spite of the Communists' interest in maintaining close economic ties with this country, it is generally recognized in Washington that there is little the United States can do to encourage political moderation in Prague at this point.

WINIFRED N. HADSEL

AFRICA PLAYS NEW ROLE IN WESTERN STRATEGY

In his final report as Chief of Staff, made public on February 15, General Dwight D. Eisenhower emphasized the necessity of maintaining the independence of Mediterranean states in order to assure free communications and commerce through that international waterway. "War . . . would be close to us," he said, if "this oldest corridor between the East and the West were walled up." Eisenhower's view acknowledges the fact that the new predominance of the United States as a world power inevitably leads it into the vitally important area of the Mediterranean where three continents converge. American policies toward Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran,

Palestine and the former Italian colonies are influenced by this fundamental fact.

Bloodshed in Greece and Palestine has focused diplomatic controversy on Southern Europe and the Middle East, thus obscuring significant African developments which are closely related to the Mediterranean crisis. Three African regions involved are the northern coast, East and West Africa, and the southern end of the continent.

ITALY'S FORMER COLONIES. The importance of Italy's former colonies in Africa has been accentuated by Soviet-American controversy over the January 14 announcement that an American air base at

Mellaha, Tripolitania, would be reopened by the United States. Tripolitania, which has been under British military administration since it was occupied during the war, lies within bombing range of Greece and the Dardanelles. Observers wonder what effect the reopening of the Mellaha base will have on American policy concerning the final disposition of the Italian colonies.

Libya (Tripolitania and Cyrenaica), Eritrea and Italian Somaliland were removed from Italian sovereignty by the peace treaty ratified on September 15, 1947. The final status of these three African territories, however, is still a major subject of dispute among Britain, France, the United States and Russia. At the moment a commission of inquiry from the four powers is investigating political, economic and social problems in the colonies. If the Big Four cannot reach a decision before September 15, 1948, they have agreed to submit the question to the UN General Assembly and to accept the recommendation of that body. Meanwhile rumors have circulated that England and the United States might establish a joint naval and air base at Benghazi in Cyrenaica. Eritrea is strategically important because of its location on the Red Sea.

EAST AFRICAN BASE? World War II changed the pattern of Mediterranean strategy. France is gone from Syria and Lebanon, and Britain will have withdrawn from Palestine by the summer of 1948, and removed its troops from Egypt and the Suez Canal by the end of 1949. Bombardment of the Suez Canal, and Axis control of the Tripoli-Benghazi-Sicily triangle during World War II prevented Anglo-American control of the Mediterranean. Long-range planes and the atomic bomb might enable the Soviet Union to accomplish the same objective in the event of war with the West.

In such a case, Anglo-American strategy might be forced to concentrate, not on keeping the Mediterranean open, but on keeping it closed to the Soviet Union and on preventing the Russians from utilizing Middle East oil. For this purpose, military bases in Africa south of the Sahara seem essential. East Africa is within striking range of the Middle East, and is a logical withdrawal point for British troops evacuating not only Palestine and Egypt, Iraq and Burma.

A hundred Royal Engineers arrived in Kenya in September 1947 to begin preparations for a vast depot for military stores coming in from areas being evacuated by Britain. The British government, however, has not yet announced whether Kenya would become a major military base. Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, Chief of the Imperial General Staff recently visited British military establishments throughout Africa. When queried in Kenya on December 11, 1947, Montgomery declared that the colony would be a wonderful country for mili-

tary training but was noncommittal about bases.

WEST AFRICAN LIFELINE. "East and West Africa are links in a chain of defence in the new concept of equatorial strategy," the London *Times* commented on November 14, 1947. On the air route between them lies the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which is also important because it borders the Red Sea, and connects British East Africa with Libya. Through the harbors and airfields of West Africa came planes and supplies for the Middle East and India during World War II. Moreover, Britain raised nearly 400,000 troops from its East and West African colonies.

As a result of wartime expansion, more than forty airfields, landing grounds and seaplane bases are available in the four colonies of British West Africa today. The United States Army built a \$5.5 million air base at Roberts Field, Liberia which handled as many as 17,000 planes a month during the war. And the United States Navy has just completed a deep water harbor with docks 2,000 feet long at Monrovia, Liberia, which is capable of quick conversion into a submarine base. United States Naval and Marine officers are accompanying a scientific expedition which the University of California recently dispatched to Africa. One of the finest harbors on the western shores of the continent is located at Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone, where more than 250 ships, including the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, were anchored at one time during the war.

INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT FROM THE SOUTH? British and South African periodicals lately have advocated industrial development of the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia to provide support for bases to the north. The Union, which has over 10,000 industrial concerns already in operation, has set one million tons a year as its production goal for steel. Plans are ready for the completion of a road between Southern Rhodesia and Kenya, and it is hoped that railroad connections between Southern Rhodesia and Tanganyika will be provided in the next few years. The Kariba Gorge scheme of Southern Rhodesia promises to harness the potential hydro-electric power of the Zambesi river to the production of iron and steel.

Field Marshal Montgomery was warmly cheered when he visited South Africa in November. The newspaper *Cape Argus* commented on November 11: "The world is currently involved in a quarrel between the Communist and Western powers, and South Africa must side with the latter. It is possible that the Union may be called upon to fill a role as supply base, and with the world situation what it is, we cannot evade our responsibilities."

VERNON MCKAY

(The first of three articles on the strategic and economic importance of Africa.)

HAVANA PARLEY GRAPPLES WITH PROBLEMS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

Although the UN Conference on World Trade and Employment has been in continuous session in Havana since November 21, the delegates of the fifty-eight participating countries have not yet adopted a charter for the proposed International Trade Organization (ITO). The draft text under consideration had previously been approved by an eighteen-nation Preparatory Committee, after many months of laborious negotiations in London, New York and Geneva. In this preliminary stage, however, attention was focused primarily on ironing out the conflicting views of the more highly developed nations. One of the most controversial issues was whether there should be an absolute ban on the use of quantitative import controls, as advocated by the United States.

Countries devastated during the war insisted on the right to maintain direct limitations on imports, so long as a balance-of-payments deficit existed. This stipulation was finally accepted. There remained, however, the demand of the underdeveloped countries that they also be allowed to apply import quotas in promoting industrialization. Once again a bargain was struck: It was agreed that quantitative restrictions might be applied, provided prior approval of the ITO was obtained. But China and India accepted this compromise with reservations, and it was indicated that other underdeveloped countries would also insist on greater freedom in determining their commercial policy.

QUEST FOR BALANCED DEVELOPMENT. To evaluate properly the pros and cons of this controversy between more and less highly developed nations, several factors should be considered. The driving force behind the movement for a greater degree of industrialization is the desire to avoid undue dependence on food and raw material exports, the prices of which have always been more unstable than those of manufactured goods. Moreover, it has long since been recognized that unless a country has a diversified economy, its national income will remain at a low level. For these and other reasons, therefore, most underdeveloped nations are seeking to broaden the basis of the national economy by greater development of industrial enterprise. Many were cut off during the war from customary sources of supply for manufactures, and accordingly have suffered varying degrees of hardship. At the same time, this war-engendered drop in competitive imports permitted a substantial growth of domestic

industry in many instances. Not unnaturally, every precaution is being taken to maintain these gains and, in fact, to add to them. As in the early stages of the economic development of the United States, there is an impelling urge to promote industrialization.

ISSUES DEBATED ANEW. At the Havana parley, delegates from Latin America, as well as the Middle East, have steadfastly insisted that the ITO charter grant the undeveloped members a considerable measure of freedom in limiting competitive imports. The policy of the United States and other highly industrialized countries in opposing a flexible rule on quantitative controls is criticized as a calculated move to prevent the growth of manufacturing enterprise in other parts of the world. Likewise, provisions of the draft charter which seek to safeguard the interests of foreign investors are resisted on the score that such regulations may limit the growth of industry which is locally owned and managed. Finally, a number of countries whose production has been largely confined to food and raw materials seek to encourage economic development through the formation of customs unions.

The American delegation for its part agreed to freer trade on a regional basis, with the requirement, however, that the participants undertake to reduce steadily the tariff rates applied to nonmembers. But the underdeveloped countries, not having as yet built up an efficient industrial economy, are reluctant to extend their tariff reductions in this manner, since it is feared that the result would be a permanent sacrifice of the home market to foreign enterprise.

The contention of the United States and other industrial countries that protective tariffs and subsidies are sufficient instruments to safeguard the growth of local industry is considered invalid. Adequate protection, it is argued, can be had only when quantitative import controls are employed—a view endorsed by the American members of the Joint Philippine-American Finance Commission in a report released in 1947.

HAROLD H. HUTCHESON

The Balkans, Frontier of Two Worlds, by William V. Ki and Frank O'Brien. New York, Knopf, 1947. \$3.50

An impressionistic account by two journalists of post-war developments in the Balkans. While strongly critical of Russian actions, the authors also believe that the lapses of American policy-makers contributed to the establishment of Communist regimes in this area.

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